

# Parenting Education Network

## N.C. Cooperative Extension to offer on-line parenting chat



Parenting is a job that raises many questions. Now answers are available from North Carolina Cooperative Extension through the simple click of a mouse.

Since February 12, parents have been able to log in to a chat called "Possibility Parenting" every Monday night to pose their own questions. Dr. Karen DeBord, North Carolina State University associate professor and Ex-

tension specialist in child development and parenting provides answers.

The chats, held from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m., Monday nights, are accessible by selecting the "chat" icon on the Website <http://www.ncpen.org/>. Some nights are devoted to specific topics, while others are open for discussion of any parenting topic.

DeBord also provides regular parenting columns through N.C. State's Department of Communication Services. The "Possibility Parenting" columns, giving answers to parents' questions, are provided to North Carolina newspapers every two weeks. In these columns, she answers questions such as, "Why doesn't my child cry more?" "Should my teen get a job?" or "Is my child ready for kindergarten?"

In addition, DeBord answers parenting and child development questions posted to Cooperative Extension's "Ask the Specialist" Web site, <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/fcs/ask/ask.html>. To pose a question to DeBord through this site, log on and select the category "Child Care and Development." ☞

Topics for the initial "Possibility Parenting" chats are:

**March 12:** Open conversation-Your parenting questions and concerns

**March 19:** Open conversation-Your parenting questions and concerns

**March 26:** Parenting adolescents and teens

## 101 Ways to Be a Special Dad

by Stephanie Moore, Parent, Business Owner, NCPEN member

"For he's a jolly good fellow, for he's a jolly good fellow..." A father brings something special and unique to a parent-child relationship. But even fathers run out of ideas.

Never fear! Vicky Lansky has put together a book that lists 101 Ways to Be a Special Dad. Here are some tips from 101 Ways to Be a Special Dad to get you started:

☛ Have you cuddled your child today? Both girls and boys need appropriate affection from their father.

☛ Plan a special time to rent your child's favorite movie. Then pop some popcorn and watch the movie together on the floor.

☛ Thumb wrestle with your child. Kids love it. Take turns winning.

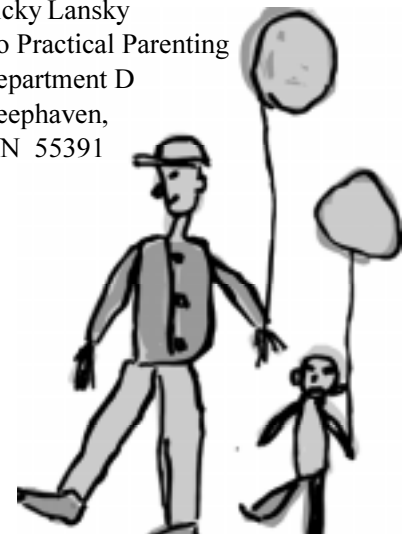
☛ Arrange to have lunch with your child at day care, preschool, or elementary school. Discuss it with your child beforehand, especially if she or he is older, or make it a surprise.

☛ Mail a surprise (such as a card, tape, or book) from your place of business. Who doesn't love getting goodies in the mail? It's very grown-up.

Vicky Lansky has written more than twenty-five books in which she shares what has worked for her and others as parents. For a free catalog of her books, drop a note to the address below or call

1-800-255-3379. You can also check your local library. ☞

Vicky Lansky  
c/o Practical Parenting  
Department D  
Deephaven,  
MN 55391



Mary Had a Little Lamb, Bobby Had a Baby Goat  
by Karen DeBord - State Extension Specialist, Child Development, North Carolina  
State University, NCPEN member

Was there really a person named  
Mother Goose?

Nobody knows for sure. But the rich collection of Mother Goose folk songs and rhymes has been with us for generations. The continued popularity of the rhymes suggests they will be part of our literary heritage for many more generations.

The rhyming words and singsong quality of nursery rhymes can help teach children prereading skills. But the words, which were written in a different time, still may carry subtle messages that parents may find objectionable.

Consider the messages about boys and girls in Mother Goose rhymes. Girls are flower tenders and frightened curd eaters. Boys, in contrast, are kings, candlestick jumpers, and scholars. Girls get stuck in pumpkin shells. Boys dash off to adventures.

Even though the message is subtle, nursery rhymes can affect the way children think about themselves and others. In their formative years, children should hear about equality, love, responsibility, and respect for living things and resources. We have a responsibility to assist children in the growing-up process without nurturing bias toward gender, color, age, or religion. Mother Goose has survived because of its musical and poetic merit, not because of the words; and in this vein, we find the message can be updated without taking away the joy of the meter and rhyme.

When singing songs and reading books, take time to change any words that show disrespect for or stereotype others. Consider how changing a few words sends a totally different message in the following rhymes.

Jack, be nimble! Jack, be quick!  
Jack, jump over the candlestick!

Jill, be nimble! Jump it, too!  
If Jack can do it, so can you.

Some of the revised rhymes, although creative, will make you chuckle a bit. On the other hand, although the message has been updated, occasionally it seems to lose something in the translation. Like this one:

Jack Spratt could eat no fat; his  
wife could eat no lean.  
And so between the two of them,  
they licked the platter clean.

Both Spratts, I'm sure of that,  
much better off would be  
To leave the fat upon the plate  
and be cholesterol-free.

It takes time to modify traditional nursery rhymes, but the effort will be worth it. Being sensitive to the feelings of others is one of the most important things we can teach young children.

When selecting books, carefully consider the messages sent by both the pictures and the words. And don't forget to sensitize yourself and others to the subtle messages sent by traditional career labels. Finding a new term is not always easy. Any suggestions for an alternative to "snowman"?

**FOR FURTHER READING:**

Father Gander Nursery Rhymes by Father Gander. 1985. Available from Advocacy Press, P.O. Box 236, Dept. A, Santa Barbara, CA 93102. \$12.95.

For more information about helping children grow up without bias, refer to the book *Anti-bias Curriculum* by Louise Derman-Sparks. This book is published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1834 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20009-5786. \$7.00.

March 26, 2001

On March 26, Mary Sheedy Kurcinka, best-selling author of *Raising Your Spirited Child and Kids, Parents, and Power Struggles*, will present "Caring for the Future: Connecting With Kids" for parents of young children.

The presentation, co-sponsored by Project Enlightenmet of the Wake County Public School System and the Meredith College Chapter of the American Education for Young Children, will be held in Jones Auditorium at Meredith College on March 26 from 7 to 9 p.m. Cost is \$10.

In her presentation Ms. Kurcinka will discuss how a close connection with a caring adult has been found to be the best antidote for preventing youth problems and can lead to success in school. She will discuss power struggles and will show parents how to bring down the intensity of power struggles, negotiate the tough issues, and, most importantly, build a relationship that keeps parents and children working together for a lifetime. Ms. Kurcinka also will show parents how these everyday power struggles and headache-producing hassles with kids can actually be opportunities to teach children essential life skills and build strong connections. 🐾

Tickets are on sale now! For information call Jackie at 919-664-7781.

